News from Cam Gordon Council Member, Second Ward January 2012

http://www.minneapolismn.gov/council/ward2

1st Annual Community Connections Conference on Saturday, February 11. The Neighborhood and Community Relations Department is hosting a conference designed for neighborhood organizations, cultural communities, nonprofit organizations, City departments and residents to share best practices of neighborhood engagement. Angela Glover Blackwell, president and CEO of PolicyLink, a national research and action institute working to advance economic and social equity, will give the keynote address. The conference will include a Neighborhood Café and 16 workshops, and will be held at St. Mary's University Event Center - formerly known as the Zuhrah Shrine Event Center - 2540 Park Ave. S. Learn more at: http://www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr/CommunityConnectionsConference

**Urban Agriculture Ordinance Amendments.** On January 25, the City Planning Commission unanimously voted to approve the zoning code amendments I have authored to help implement the Urban Agriculture Policy Plan the Council adopted last spring. This is an exciting first step in changing the City's land use rules to make urban agriculture possible. You can see the draft text amendments here:

www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-083823.pdf. The commission received 70 written comments and 13 people spoke at the public hearing and all were in favor of the amendments as proposed and recommended by staff. The amendments will now move to the Zoning and Planning Committee for consideration on March 1. Read more analysis on the Second Ward blog.

Composting Ordinance. I have introduced an ordinance change to the City's ordinance on backyard composting. This ordinance was developed over the course of the last six months by compost experts in the community, staff from the City, County and MPCA, and my office. It would increase the maximum size of an allowable composting area, and differentiate between the sizes of backyard composting and composting at community gardens and urban farms. It would also clarify what materials may be composted, what compost bins should be made of, and authorize City staff to require people who are out of compliance with the composting ordinance to take a composter educational course. The public hearing at the Regulatory Energy and Environment committee is tentatively scheduled for **February 27**at 1:30pm.

Hiawatha Power Lines. The Public Utilities Commission has ruled that Xcel's proposed Hiawatha Transmission Line should be buried beneath 28<sup>th</sup> St E, as the City and Midtown Greenway Coalition had advocated. In 2009 the City Council passed a resolution supporting burying the lines if it was determined that the additional high voltage lines were in fact needed and were not avoidable through energy conservation and renewable energy sources. I was glad to co-author this resolution with fellow Council Members Gary Schiff and Robert Lilligren. The PUC has yet to decide whether the costs of burying the line will be borne by Minneapolis ratepayers or Xcel's entire Minnesota rate base, but the City and Xcel are both advocating for the broader option.

Council Debates Stadium Proposal. On January 26, the City Council discussed the Mayor and Council President's proposal for a new Vikings Stadium in Minneapolis. (See <a href="http://www.minneapolismn.gov/meetings/cow/WCMS1P-084388">http://www.minneapolismn.gov/meetings/cow/WCMS1P-084388</a>, and <a href="http://v.qwikcast.tv/view.aspx?q=PVG6">http://v.qwikcast.tv/view.aspx?q=PVG6</a> for more). I was glad to see that the plan includes a way to remove the costs of the Target Center from property taxes and that the preferred location is the current site of the Metrodome. This site has already been assembled at great cost in east Downtown and is currently served by a light rail station that will soon grant access to two light rail corridors. But I was very concerned about the use of public funds, the amount of debt that would be taken on by the City and the use of local taxes as a funding source. Under this plan, the City would take on over \$300,000,000 in debt to be paid back with local hospitality, entertainment and

sales tax revenue over 30 years. I am also very concerned about the plan to ignore our Charter. I believe that no city resources over \$10 million dollars should be used without a referendum, in keeping with the Charter. The state legislature should not pass any proposal that undermines our City's most fundamental legal document, essentially our Constitution.

**STEP-UP Deadline is February 3.** The City of Minneapolis Employment and Training Program (METP) has announced that applications are now being accepted for summer youth employment STEP-UP opportunities. The application deadline is February 3, 2012. Applications are available at <a href="http://www.minneapolismn.gov/news/WCMS1P-085161">http://www.minneapolismn.gov/news/WCMS1P-085161</a>. For more information or if you are a Minneapolis business interested in employing a STEP-UP intern contact Tammy Dickinson at (612) 673-5041.

**Remittances to Somalia.** The Council has unanimously passed a resolution calling on all those who have played a role in the stoppage of money transfers through Hawalas from Minneapolis residents to relatives in Somalia to find a way to reopen this absolutely critical financial link. As Somalia suffers one of the worst famines in the world in decades, it is vital that Minneapolis residents continue to be able to send remittances to their relatives. Read more on the Second Ward blog.

City Climate Change Plan. In 2012 the City will draft a new Climate Action Plan. A public meeting will be held 5:30pm, on Wednesday, February 1 at Pohlad Hall, Minneapolis Central Library to launch the planning process. At this meeting climate experts will explain climate science, the climate history of Minnesota, and the health impacts of climate change. Attendance is free, but space is limited. Please RSVP at <a href="http://mplsclimateaction.eventbrite.com">http://mplsclimateaction.eventbrite.com</a>. Given current trends, the Midwest is likely to face increased heat waves, reduced air quality and more periods of both floods and drought. The Climate Action Plan will measure the impact of current City efforts and develop new initiatives that will focus on transportation, buildings and waste. For more information on the Plan, visit <a href="https://www.minneapolismn.gov/sustainability/climate">www.minneapolismn.gov/sustainability/climate</a>.

New Sustainability Targets Approved. In January, the City's 26 sustainability indicators and targets were re-evaluated and amended. Our Affordable Housing indicator was changed to measure Cost-Burdened Households, which appears to be a more meaningful measurement. New census data and new national "Healthy People 2020" goals helped to refine the targets for Healthy Infants, Teen Pregnancy, HIV and Gonorrhea, Healthy Weight, and Asthma. Also, for the first time, we approved numerical targets for Green Jobs, Local Food, Community Engagement, and Arts and the Economy. A few of the indicators – Air Quality, Biking, Homelessness, and Graduation Rate – remain unchanged. I also successfully amended our Employment and Poverty Indicator target to focus more clearly on closing racial disparities in both employment and poverty.

**Death Near the River.** As you may have heard, a man was found dead near Riverside Park in January. It appears that he may have been homeless, and though I have not yet heard from the Police Department about a likely cause of death, it was very cold during the period in which he died. If you notice persons who seem to be homeless and in need of help, please call **Street Outreach**, a joint project of Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis and Saint Stephens church, at 612-879-7624.

**Taxis Forced to Take Credit Cards.** Over my objections, the Council has voted to force taxis in Minneapolis to take credit cards. I opposed this action because it became clear that the credit card fees (amounting to 5-7% of each fare) will almost universally come out of the income of drivers. I do not believe it is fair to place the convenience of taxi passengers or profits for Wall Street above the well-being of taxi drivers. You can read more on the Second Ward blog.

**Change in Fire Chief.** I was very sad to see Fire Chief Alex Jackson retire this month. Chief Jackson has served as Minneapolis Fire Chief since 2008 and has been working for the City and as part of the Fire Department for 27 years. He was one of very few people of color among City

Department Heads and the first African American fire chief. The Mayor's nomination of John Fruetel as the next chief who was unanimously confirmed by the Council this month. John Fruetel began his career as a firefighter with the Minneapolis Fire Department in 1979, was promoted to captain in 1986 and to battalion chief in 1993. In 1998, Fruetel was named deputy chief of the Training Division, then deputy chief of Operations prior to being appointed assistant chief of Operations 2007. In 2010, Fruetel moved to the City's Emergency Management Division, where he was responsible for the implementation and coordination of the Training Needs Assessment Program.

Redistricting. Once every decade, following the census, governments throughout the United States redraw the boundaries of their wards and districts. In Minneapolis, due to the successful Charter amendment I sponsored, the Charter Commission is in charge of redistricting the city, creating boundaries for elections in 2012 and beyond. They have been working on this for several months and have a first draft of new boundaries prepared to share with the public. Public hearings on the first draft maps will be held February 29 and March 1. See <a href="http://www.minneapolismn.gov/redistricting2012">http://www.minneapolismn.gov/redistricting2012</a> for more information. Additionally, Common Cause Minnesota is organizing two trainings for individuals to learn how they can draw their own maps and other ways that they can have their voice heard in the redistricting process. A February 4 training will be held from 10am-noon at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs and will focus on how redistricting works at the local level. The February 18 training will be held from 9:30am-12:30pm at UROC on the north side and will show attendees how they can draw their own maps. Learn more at: <a href="http://www.drawminneapolis.org/2012/01/minneapolis-residents-asked-to-draw-a-better-minneapolis/">http://www.drawminneapolis.org/2012/01/minneapolis-residents-asked-to-draw-a-better-minneapolis/</a>.

One Minneapolis, One Read: Continue the Conversation. A group of Minneapolis teens teamed up with MVStudio last fall to interview family members or someone in their community about their experiences with race relations. These videos will be shown on Sunday, February 5, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m. at North Regional Library. On February 11, 2012, 10 a.m.-noon, there will be a Minneapolis Community Education "Grace of Silence" book discussion at Pratt school, 66 Malcolm Ave. SE., Minneapolis, visit <a href="www.mplscommunityed.com/">www.mplscommunityed.com/</a> to register. Learn more at: <a href="http://oneminneapolisoneread.com/">http://oneminneapolisoneread.com/</a>.

Pay Equity Implementation Report. In January, the City's Executive Committee reviewed our Human Resources Department's 2011 Pay Equity Implementation Report that will be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Management and Budget, as required by the Local Government Pay Equity Act. While clearly within the state identified acceptable range, the report revealed that male dominated City jobs yield higher pay than comparable female dominated City jobs. This shows that there does not appear to be perfect pay equity in City government.

**Minneapolis Digital Inclusion Survey.** This month, Minneapolis households are being mailed surveys about digital inclusion. The City hopes to get resident perspectives about how people use computers, mobile devices and the Internet. If you receive a survey, please take a few minutes to complete the survey and mail it back in the envelope provided.

**2011 Bicycling Account.** The City's Public Works department has put together a 2011 Bicycling Account, an in-depth report on our bicycling activities and accomplishments in 2011. You can read it here:

www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@publicworks/documents/images/wcms1p-085029.pdf. It's exciting to read such a clear and compelling account of the progress we made over the last year. Kudos to Public Works for putting this together - I hope that they will continue to report out this effectively every other year, as currently planned. Read more on the Second Ward blog.

**Bike Ambassador Program**. I was pleased to learn that Transit for Livable Communities has approved funding for a 4<sup>th</sup> year of our successful Bike Ambassador program. This award includes \$220,000 to extend funding through October 2012. The Ambassador Program includes three part

time ambassadors dedicated to fostering bike use and safety throughout the city. They are Rebecca Gomez: 612-333-3410 <a href="mailto:rebecca.gomez@minneapolismn.gov">rebecca.gomez@minneapolismn.gov</a>, David Peterson: 612-333-3410 <a href="mailto:david.peterson@minneapolismn.gov">david.peterson@minneapolismn.gov</a>, and Mackenzie Turner Bargen, 612-333-3410 <a href="mailto:mackenzie.turner@minneapolismn.gov">mackenzie.turner@minneapolismn.gov</a>.

Radon Kits Available. January is Radon Action Month, and the City is offering radon test kits to residents for only \$9. Radon is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas that occurs naturally in Minnesota soils and can enter homes primarily through cracks and openings in basement or foundation floors and walls. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and more than 21,000 deaths are attributed to radon each year. Radon detection kits are available for purchase at the City of Minneapolis Development Review, 250 S. Fourth St., Room 300, on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Thursdays from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. http://www.minneapolismn.gov/news/employees/WCMS1P-084959

Lots for Community Gardens. The City has 10 vacant lots available for qualifying groups to lease for community gardens. These City-owned lots were selected because they are not appropriate for development and will remain available for years of gardening even as the economy changes and redevelopment picks up. Lots are available first-come, first-served to qualifying groups. Experienced community garden groups may be eligible for three- to five-year leases, while groups gardening for the first time will start with one-year leases. A qualifying group will be a not-for-profit or a group with a not-for-profit sponsor. The garden will also need to have liability insurance. For more visit

http://www.minneapolismn.gov/health/homegrown/dhfs\_gardeners or call 612-673-5051.

Marriage Amendment. The City Council voted unanimously at Committee of the Whole Thursday, January 26 to publicly oppose a proposed state constitutional amendment that would ban marriage for same-sex couples in Minnesota. This action will be officially approved at the City Council's February 10 meeting. In 2011, the Minnesota legislature voted to place the following question on the November 6, 2012 election ballot: "Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to provide that only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota?" If the measure is approved, the state constitution would be amended to add a new section that reads; "Only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota." I strongly oppose this ballot initiative, and am a proud Steering Committee member of Minnesota United for All Families, a broad coalition of organizations joined to defeat the proposed amendment. To learn more or get involved visit <a href="https://www.mnunited.org">www.mnunited.org</a>

**Fire and Ice Festival.** Prospect Park's annual winter event is **Saturday, February 4** from 5:30 - 8 p.m. at Luxton Park. There will be a bonfire, horse-drawn hay rides, music, food and good cheer.

Riverside Ave Street Reconstruction and Street Lighting Projects. Final approvals are moving forward for the second phase of the Riverside Avenue reconstruction project. The Council has designated the location and improvements proposed to be made (Cedar Ave S to 23rd Ave S); received the cost estimates of \$5,850,000 for the road reconstruction and \$272,800 for the lighting; authorized the acquisition of permanent easements for sidewalk and ramp expansions; and directed the City Engineer to prepare proposed special assessments against the list of benefited properties. There will be a public hearing on the project on February 28 at 9:30 am at City Hall. For more see:

 $\underline{\text{http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@clerk/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-084582.pdf}$ 

**Minnehaha to be Reconstructed.** The City's Capital Improvement Program indicates that Minnehaha Avenue is to be reconstructed between 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Streets in Seward, starting in 2015. This section of roadway is definitely heavily degraded, and reconstructing it will help it work better for all road users.

**City-Owned Parking Lots on the West Bank.** Community Planning and Economic Development staff is preparing a timeline to issue a Request for Proposals for the management of the three City owned commercial parking lots on the West Bank (A, B, and C). Staff expects to issue the RFP this spring, with a decision this fall.

**Funds for Currie Park Lofts.** The Council's Community Development committee has unanimously voted in favor of a resolution giving preliminary approval of up to \$27 million in tax exempt multifamily housing entitlement revenue bonds for the Currie Park Lofts project. The committee also authorized staff to continue analysis of the Currie Park Lofts project proposal to determine if tax increment financing (TIF) assistance is appropriate and justifiable. The Metropolitan Council has also awarded the project \$400,000 and the Council will be considering an Affordable Housing Trust Fund loan of up to 1,200,000 in the next few weeks.

Bailey Building Loan. Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) staff have sent a default notice to the West Bank CDC on the loan secured by the Bailey Building at Cedar and Riverside. The full amount of the loan, \$347,523, was due on November first of last year. The WBCDC made a partial payment of \$69,504.60, leaving an unpaid balance of \$278,018.40. The WBCDC requested that the City enter into a payment plan under which this unpaid balance would be paid off over the next five years. The City has expressed a willingness to enter into such a plan if the WBCDC cooperates in resolving disputes related to the City-owned parking lot adjacent to 1927 5th St S (the African Development Center).

**Ross Pharmacy Loan.** CPED staff have also been in discussions with Phillip and Ann Kor, the owners of Ross Pharmacy, about forgiveness of a \$69,000 no-interest loan. Staff have agreed to extend the payment date from August of this year until 2017, or when the building is sold. An interest rate of 3.9% has been put on the loan.

**McDonalds on Lake.** Despite my no vote, the Council majority voted to grant the appeal filed on behalf of McDonalds related to the site plan for the new store they plan to build at their 31st and Lake location. This includes a drive thru lane that wraps around the building. This overruled the Planning Commission's approved conditions that the building be relocated to comply with the more pedestrian friendly Zoning Code and be located within 8 feet of the property lines along Lake St and 31st Ave S.; and that the main entrances to the building connect to the sidewalks along E Lake St and 31st Ave S.

Oromo Cultural Exhibit at Augsburg. On February 25 and 26, a photography exhibit and cultural presentation that documents the ways the Oromo women of Ethiopia cultivate beauty will be held at Foss Center, Augsburg College. The event is sponsored by Resources for the Enrichment of African Lives (REAL), with the support of Augsburg College Women's Resource Center, and Bareedina & Siiqqee (Beauty & Solidarity), which celebrates the Strength of the Oromo Women of Ethiopia through art. The free exhibit is open from 1-4pm each day of the program. For more see: bareedinafina.pdf.

**Rental Conversion Fees.** For single family dwellings being converted to rental properties, the Council has voted to provide an incentive for owners who attend a property management course. The \$1000 conversion and inspection fee will be reduced by \$250 to \$750. In recent years there has been a significant increase of property owners purchasing single family dwellings for the purpose of renting and people deciding to rent their homes for the first time in order to meet their financial needs and / or avoid foreclosures.

**Congratulations Fartun Hassan!** Second Ward seventh-grader Fartun Hassan has won third place in the 2012 Martin Luther King Essay Contest. Great work, Fartun! More information is available here: <a href="http://civilrightsminneapolis.wordpress.com/2012/01/25/2012-mlk-essay-contest-and-the-winners-are/">http://civilrightsminneapolis.wordpress.com/2012/01/25/2012-mlk-essay-contest-and-the-winners-are/</a>.

**Routes to Rails.** The District Council Collaborative has organized a roundtable discussion to help shape the "routes to rails" walkability/accessibility survey on Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, 5-6:30pm, at the Central Corridor Resource Center, 1080 University Avenue W, St. Paul.

**Izzy's.** The Council has voted unanimously to sell a parcel of land near Gold Medal Park to Izzy's Ice Cream company to construct a new ice cream factory with event and retail space. Some residents of the nearby condo buildings raised objections to this sale, but I believe that selling to Izzy's was the best decision because this fits the approved long term plans for area; the 'industrial' use of this parcel will not have significant negative impacts on neighboring properties; deliveries will be made by a very limited number of trucks, and there are no real odor or noise concerns. And this is a great opportunity to support good paying jobs in the local food economy, in full alignment with the City's adopted Industrial Land Use policies, Green Jobs goals, and the Homegrown Minneapolis initiative.

**Kent Robbins Retires.** After 31 years of service to the City of Minneapolis, Kent Robbins is retiring. Kent served as a Council Policy Aide for years, staff of Minneapolis Community Development Agency and most recently with workforce development in the Community Planning and Economic Development department. One of Kent's many claims to fame includes being host of the City Cable television show, City Beat. I have enjoyed working with Kent a great deal, thank him for his service and wish him the best in the years ahead.

Openings on City Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Animal Care & Control Advisory Committee, Capital Long Range Improvement Commission (not Ward 2 reps though), Family Housing Fund, Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities, Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC), Minneapolis Public Housing Authority Board of Commissioners and the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee. To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@minneapolismn.gov.

**Ward Office Hours**. Every Tuesday morning I hold "Office Hours" in the Ward from 9:30-11:00am. Please feel free to call for an appointment or just stop by.

1<sup>st</sup> Tuesdays, Hard Times Café (West Bank/University);

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesdays, Muddsuckers Coffee, 1500 Como (SE Como);

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays, Pratt School (Prospect Park);

4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays, the Birchwood Cafe (Seward/Longfellow).

Gratefully yours for the privilege of serving you and with best wishes to you for a happy, healthy and peaceful 2012,

Cam Gordon
Minneapolis City Council Member, Second Ward
673-2202, 296-0579
http://www.minneapolismn.gov/council/ward2